

Workplace Traffic Safety

This is Road-Safe Workplace, an electronic newsletter about workplace traffic safety from the Vermont Department of Labor because the number one cause of death and injury in the workplace are traffic crashes. Road-Safe Workplace has been created to distribute statistics, facts, and other materials to help employers create, maintain and improve their workplace traffic safety programs. Please use this information in your company newsletters, bulletin boards, or employee e-mail memos. Your thoughts and comments are always welcome. However, if you do not wish to receive Road-Safe Workplace, please reply with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.



States Urged to Implement Primary Seat Belt Laws

Seat Belt use reached a record high of 82 percent last year, but the government and auto safety groups are still pushing for stronger enforcement to reduce the roughly 42,000 people killed in traffic crashes every year. In Vermont, seat belt use in 2005 was pegged at 84.7 percent. Vermont's seat belt law is a secondary law meaning citations can only be issued after the law enforcement officer stops the vehicle or cites the offender for another infraction.

One of the most effective methods to increase the use of seat belts in Vermont is the Ticket or Click it campaign, which this year will happen from June 22 through July 4. The Vermont Governor's Highway Safety Program has been charged with achieving a seat belt use of 85% with this year's campaign. Motorists and the general public will hear about the campaign beginning May 8. According to research, states with primary seat belt laws can expect its use rates to be about 11 percentage points higher than states with secondary seat belt laws. Based on an 11 percentage point increase over 2005 statistics, if Vermont's seat belt law was a primary law, eight lives would be saved, 40 serious injuries and \$14 million in costs would be avoided.

Other statistics show that 76 people were killed in car and light truck crashes in 2004. Of these, nearly 50% were not wearing a seat belt when the crash occurred. Vermont's fatal motor vehicle crashes reflect its standing as one of the most rural states in the nation. About 85 percent (83 of the 98 crashes) happened in rural areas of the state. This fatality rate is nearly twice the rate in urban locations. And, 63 percent of Vermont's motor vehicle fatalities involved passenger cars. The other vehicles included pick-up trucks, SUVs, and light vans.

CDC: Highway Crashes Major Cause of Brain Injury

One of the most serious injuries an individual can suffer is traumatic brain injury (TBI). A new study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it is a leading cause of death and disability in the US. The new report also says that one of the leading causes of TBI is motor vehicle crashes with incidents including drivers and passengers.

Study Suggests Sleep May Impact Injury Risk

This study, at the University of Iowa, found that sleeping for less than seven and a half hours increased the risk for injuries by 61% compared with sleeping up to eight and a half hours. At the same time, alcohol consumption of one or two or more drinks per day increased the risk for injuries among those who had sleep problems. The study was aimed to assess the association of sleep disturbance and injuries in a rural population of Iowa. Study participants were 1345 adults. Sleep problems were assessed based on self-reports at the beginning of the study. Injury information was collected by telephone interviews an average of every 6 months from August 1999 to June 2004. Avoiding alcohol consumption would be especially helpful in reducing injuries among people with sleep disturbance.

New Study Concludes Driver Behavior Causes Most Truck Crashes

Drivers of large trucks and other vehicles involved in truck crashes are ten times more likely to be the cause of the crash than other factors, such as weather, road conditions, and vehicle performance according to a new study released by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). The Large Truck Crash Causation Study was commissioned by FMCSA to review the causes of, and contributing factors to, crashes involving commercial motor vehicles. While previous data focused on specific crashes and/or individual causes of crashes, this study was the first nationwide examination of all pre-crash factors.

"This study makes it clear that we need to spend more time addressing driver behavior, as well as making sure trucks and buses are fit for the road," FMCSA Administrator Annette M. Sandberg said. "The multitude of data now available will allow us to analyze specific areas of behavior and work with our industry and safety partners to develop an agenda on driver safety that will improve commercial motor vehicle driver performance."

FMCSA will conduct analysis to further examine driver factors such as use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, speeding, fatigue, inattention, distractions, work environment, and unfamiliarity with the road. The study, conducted with the help of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, investigated a national sample of fatal and injury crashes between April 2001 and December 2003 at 24 sites in 17 states. Each crash involved at least one large truck and resulted in at least one fatality or injury. The total sample of 967 crashes included 1,127 large trucks, 959 non-truck motor vehicles, 251 fatalities, and 1,408 injuries. Action or inaction by the driver of either the truck or other vehicle was the critical reason for 88 percent of the crashes.

The data offer unprecedented detail about the events surrounding truck crashes that are not available anywhere else. The study database eventually will be available to the public to encourage further analysis and increase the knowledge about large truck crash factors.

For copies of the report, visit www.fmcsa.dot.gov.

Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries and Lost Time by Year in Vermont

As we all know, statistics take many shapes and forms. Once in a while, however, as we begin to improve our data collection process and we begin to measure the results of the workplace traffic safety message, we find some nuggets of success. Of course this can only happen if safety officers and human resource directors realize there are other cost centers beside the traditional “in-the-plant” workplace. More and more, companies are coming to realize that their cost of doing business also includes the cost of transporting goods and services caused by motor vehicle crashes.

The number of motor vehicle crashes that have caused lost time increased slightly from 2002 through 2005. However, the number of injuries resulting in lost time has dropped dramatically. This is a clear indication that businesses see that motor vehicle crashes are most definitely, a cost of doing business – both from a bent metal (vehicle damage) standpoint and physical injuries incurred in the crash, and are doing something about it.

Year	Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries	Injuries Resulting in Lost Time	Percentage of Injuries Resulting in Lost Time
2002	330	117	35.4%
2003	340	131	38.5%
2004	331	88	26.5%
2005	342	48	14%

Obviously, traffic safety programs are an effective tool in the workplace. See the following for more information about making your workplace traffic safety program more effective.

Employer Guidebook to Reduce Traffic Crashes

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) have joined forces to create the 32-page ***Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes***, featuring a 10-step program outlining what an employer can do to improve traffic safety performance and minimize the risk of motor vehicle crashes. The document includes success stories from employers who have benefited from effective driver safety programs, including Pike Industries with operations in Vermont.

The booklet is available to employers from: njames@labor.state.vt.us. Ask for the *Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes*. The booklet will be sent in the mail, so be sure to include your mailing address.

Inattention, speed, driving while impaired, disregard for stop signs and traffic lights, and failure to yield the right of way are the major causes of crashes on our highways.



**REMEMBER -- BUCKLE YOUR SEATBELT
EVERY TIME!**